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SUBJECT: Kosovo Weekly Report (August 6 - 10, 2007)

¶1. (u) This report covers activities related to Kosovo for the week of August 6.

¶2. (sbu) Summary: This week was dominated by the Serbian government's preparation for the visit of the mediating Troika to Belgrade - the GoS's adoption of proposed rules for the talks, the forming of a new negotiating team, and GoS calls for USG (but not Moscow) impartiality. End Summary.

GOVERNMENT OF SERBIA ACTIVITIES

¶3. (sbu) Belgrade media reported over the weekend the six elements of the Serbian government's proposed rules for the talks: focus on the Kosovo status, direct talks and without a timetable, Ahtisaari's plan not to be used as basis, the entire process under UN mandate, and UNSC must make the relevant decisions. The proposals were sent to the UNSYG and to the ambassadors of the CG countries.

¶4. (sbu) Daily Vecernje Novosti announced that Serbia's new team will be known this week. The known members include PM Kostunica, President Tadic, FonMin Jeremic, and Kosovo Minister Samardzic. The daily, citing several sources, wrote that members of the opposition parties who supported the resolution on continued negotiations should be invited to join the team. DSS Spokesman Mladenovic stated on August 6 that Serbia's negotiating team for Kosovo could only be formed after the first meeting between Serbia's top officials and the CG mediators. The modalities (form, content and manner) of the talks should be established first before the team is formed, he added.

¶5. (sbu) Belgrade media reported on August 7 that PM Kostunica said that new negotiations with new mediators open possibilities for reaching a compromise solution that meets the interests of Serbia and Kosovo Albanians. He underscored that Russia and Serbia will represent a policy based on respect for international law, and urged many countries, members of UNSG and European states to support this policy.

¶6. (sbu) FoNet reported on August 8 that Politika's Editor-in-chief Smajlovic assessed that Belgrade would rather lose the whole of Kosovo than divide it. She believes that there are growing hopes in Washington that division is the second best solution.

¶7. (sbu) DSS Education Minister Loncar urged the U.S. on August 7 to full restraint and impartiality in the process of resolving Kosovo's future status and declared that the U.S. is trying to revive the plan of Ahtisaari, which has been "definitely rejected." Troika's Russian Representative Bocan-Harchenko told B92 on August 8 that Russia opposes time limits for the talks, and reiterated that Ahtisaari's plan may not serve as a base for the forthcoming talks (Belgrade did not encourage Moscow to behave impartially, to absolutely no one's surprise).

¶8. (sbu) In an article submitted to NIN magazine, Kostunica's Advisor, Alexander Simic, stated that Ahtisaari's plan could be concealing NATO's intention to establish its own state in Kosovo. He

noted that under the Ahtisaari plan, the commander of international forces in an independent Kosovo, NATO-appointee, would have the supreme power about the use of military force, and that Camp Bondsteel (the US military base outside Urosevac in Southern Kosovo) would serve as Kosovo's capital.

DIPLOMATIC ACTIVITIES

¶9. (sbu) Newly-elected Albanian President Bamir Topi said on August 7 that Kosovo would soon gain independence, with the support of "the international factor," and that Albanian institutions gave an unreserved support to the negotiating team of Kosovo in the process of resolving Kosovo's future status.

¶10. (sbu) Belgrade media reported that before the CG meeting in London on August 9, Troika's EU Representative Ischinger stated that the international community and the CG Troika were offering Belgrade and Pristina their last chance to reach a negotiated settlement. He also said that the parties would be encouraged to suggest their own ideas for solving the problems while the troika would act as mediator in that dialogue. He stressed that the starting point in the Kosovo status talks must be the actual situation on the ground and that Kosovo has not been under Serbia's administration and control for the past 8 years. After the CG meeting, Ischinger said that the meeting was a good beginning of the difficult mission ahead; adding that the success or failure of the new negotiations will be the success or failure for Belgrade and Pristina.

SIMMONS